

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

This project, "A Middle Ages Trade Fair," helps students to understand the society that evolved in Europe during the historical period known as the Middle Ages. Though entered in the Social Studies category for this application, this project is interdisciplinary in nature. As each student is engaged in assuming the identity of someone from the Middle Ages, that student gains a true understanding of the life that particular person had within that society. Uniting all these individuals together on the day of the Trade Fair in a culminating activity integrates the social, political, and economic fabric of the society for all to see. The project is carried out by sixth graders but other grade levels are involved as well.

After completing the Trade Fair questionnaire, students are divided into groups based on their preferences for the particular segment of society they would like to research and represent on the day of the fair. Each group is assigned to a supervising teacher who introduces the requirements pertinent to that group. During preparation for the culminating project, students will:

- ◆ work cooperatively to complete their group requirements;
- ◆ understand the governing system of feudalism, and how it worked to sustain law and order;
- ◆ research the clothing of the Middle Ages and create an authentic costume for the person they are representing;
- ◆ create an "internal monologue" writing journal describing their activities and thoughts leading up to the fair;
- ◆ present their group requirements to their peers during a series of dress rehearsal assemblies;
- ◆ visit a Renaissance Fair as part of a grade level field trip to gain a better understanding of what a trade fair is.

Students working on their group requirements will:

- ◆ research laws and forms of punishment, develop five laws for the fair, simulate practices used on lawbreakers and create scaled replicas of devices used to punish lawbreakers;
- ◆ create a money system for the fair using three coins from different countries, set the value and exchange rate for the coins, and set the price for goods to be sold at the fair;
- ◆ research a famous personality of the Middle Ages, prepare and present a biographical soliloquy, and create props and exhibits that their particular famous person would bring to the fair;
- ◆ research the history of craft guilds, create five laws by which the craft guild will operate, establish and operate an apprentice system with the fifth grade, and create replicas of products produced by their craft guild to sell;
- ◆ perform the play "The Black Death," and research and present examples of music and dance from the Middle Ages;
- ◆ research and demonstrate the skills of jestering and juggling, research the games of the Middle Ages, and create replicas of these games for the entertainment of the visitors to the fair;
- ◆ research and learn about the art of storytelling, select a story and retell it in the format of storytelling, with props;
- ◆ research wizardry, and demonstrate through experimentation and simulations: alchemy, medicine, and sorcery;
- ◆ research heraldry and apply its tenets to the design of a knight's shield, work with the armorer's guild to design authentic weapons, research and simulate a knight's tournament, exhibiting an understanding of the contests and skills involved, and apply the code of chivalry to conduct and behavior during the tournament;
- ◆ identify and represent the different titles of the church class, build a replica of a cathedral identifying its parts, demonstrate the role of the church in education, and present a historical overview of the Crusades;
- ◆ research and represent the seasonal activities of the serf class by the creation of a yearly calendar, display and explain the holidays on said calendar, and build and conduct a maypole ceremony for entertainment purposes;
- ◆ research and create replicas of tools used by carpenters, design and build craft stalls for the craft guilds.

This project creates a cooperative jigsaw puzzle of the entire sixth grade. Regrouping by grade level provides students an opportunity to work with different students and teachers. Involving the fifth grade in the apprentice program introduces these students to the project and broadens its cooperative scope. Much of the research is done on the Internet or CD-ROMs, and all presented text for this project is completed on Microsoft Word. Parental and community involvement is a must when pooling the supplies and materials needed for a project of this magnitude. This project addresses the variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences found at any grade level, allowing students the opportunity to find their niche and pursue the interests they have identified through the survey questionnaire.

This project includes the five basic elements of cooperative learning as identified by Johnson & Johnson. By its nature, cooperative learning activities produce higher achievement and increased retention, greater use of higher-level reasoning skills, greater intrinsic motivation, and more on-task behavior. As educators, we all know that involving the student will lead to greater understanding. The hands-on nature of this project, as well as the "learning by doing" simulations, motivate students to have a better appreciation for and a greater desire to learn about a different historical period.

This project can be easily replicated in any school district because of its minimal cost. Materials and supplies are often on hand or can be located in the community free of charge. Lower grade levels might want to replicate one or more aspects of this project such as the craft guilds or the biographical study of famous people. Any historical period could also be substituted for the Middle Ages with slight modifications.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum Content and/or Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).

The entire sixth grade student population participates in this project. This includes students identified as gifted and talented, as well as those in regular education, basic skills, and special education, in a heterogeneous setting.

Workplace Readiness Standards identified for this project and activities to address the standards were the following:

- 1) Standard #2- All students will use information, technology, and other tools: Students researching this project access information on the Internet and CD-ROMs, as well as use word processing software to present information.
- 2) Standard #3- All students will use critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills: This type of project, with its open-minded investigatory nature, mandates that the student be able to use higher-level thinking skills. Students need to use a variety of informational sources and process that information by integrating, extending, and refining it. They also need to decide the most effective way to present it to the student body for their understanding during the grade level assemblies.
- 3) Standard #4- All students will demonstrate self-management skills: Students find themselves in a variety of groups ranging from a few students to groups as large as twelve, as in the case of the Performing Guild. Through group processing skills, students learn to share the work and complete a task. Through their research they are expected to take responsibility for their learning, and help their group to meet both short and long-term goals as defined by their supervising teacher. Along with this process, they are expected to provide and receive constructive criticism from their group members and learn the integration of ability, effort, and achievement.
- 4) Standard #5- All students will apply safety principles: Before the building of exhibits, and/or the creating of crafts to sell at the fair, students are instructed on safety principles, and are expected to demonstrate the safe use of tools and equipment.

Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards identified and activities to address the standards were the following:

- 6.3- All students will acquire historical understanding of political ideas, and institutions throughout the history of the world:
- 6.4- All students will acquire historical understanding of societal ideas and forces throughout the history of the world:
- 6.5- All students will acquire historical understanding of varying cultures throughout the history of the world:
- 6.6- All students will acquire historical understanding of economic ideas and institutions throughout the history of the world:
  - ◆ by writing journal entries from the point of view of the historical individual they are portraying;
  - ◆ by creating laws for the fair;
  - ◆ by creating an exchange rate for the varying coins at the fair, and setting the price of goods based on economic principles;
  - ◆ by exhibiting the three social classes of feudalism, and the role and function of each class to society;
  - ◆ by creating an authentic costume demonstrating an understanding of the person they are representing;
  - ◆ by showing an understanding of the artifacts of a society by the goods and materials produced and exhibited;
  - ◆ by identifying the importance of craft guilds, and the changes in feudalism that craft guilds caused;
  - ◆ by analyzing viewpoints of individuals at important points in history through their biographical soliloquies;
  - ◆ by simulating ideas taken from their field study of an actual trade fair.

Language Arts Core Curriculum Standards identified and activities to address the standards were the following:

- 3.1- All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences:
- 3.3- All students will write in clear, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes:
- 3.4- All students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis:
  - ◆ by writing and presenting biographical soliloquies of famous personalities;
  - ◆ by writing journal entries from the point of view of the historical individual they are portraying;
  - ◆ by participating in directed speaking activities or by speaking in impromptu situations to the visitors to the fair;
  - ◆ by communicating orally with group members to identify and solve problems associated with group requirements;
  - ◆ by speaking before a grade level assembly to present and share information on their group requirements;
  - ◆ by writing for a variety of purposes, including: to persuade, entertain, teach, and inform visitors to the fair;
  - ◆ by gathering and synthesizing data for research from a variety of sources to meet group requirements.

Science Core Curriculum Standards identified and activities to address the standards were the following:

- 5.3- All students will develop an understanding of how people of various cultures have contributed to the advancement of science and technology, and how major discoveries and events have advanced science and technology:
  - ◆ by learning about scientists and inventors from the Middle Ages in a historical context;
  - ◆ by recognizing the scientific ideas and knowledge base of the Middle Ages.

Visual and Performing Arts Core Curriculum Standards identified and activities to address the standards were the following:

- 1.2- All students will refine perceptual and technical skills through creating dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts:
- 1.5- All students will identify the various historical, social, and cultural influences and traditions which have generated artistic accomplishments throughout the ages and which continue to shape contemporary arts:
  - ◆ by performing the play "The Black Death";
  - ◆ by demonstrating performance and participation skills in dance, music, theater, and poetry.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which objectives of the practice have been met.

Assessment for this project can be characterized as ongoing and cumulative in nature, using an open-ended format with a variety of settings, and with a reliance on informal assessment tools to accurately measure the performance of students. Evaluative standards were clearly defined and communicated to students through the requirements and performance outcomes established for each segment of the Middle Ages society. The assessment tools used had several purposes: to accurately measure student performance, to give students the opportunity to reflect on themselves as learners, and to provide teachers with the feedback necessary to make curriculum decisions in planning future trade fairs.

Observations- By observing students in their daily learning situation and by measuring their level of understanding in satisfying the requirements that each group member has, a teacher can make timely and relevant decisions about instructional practices and the curriculum. Daily teacher observation with anecdotal records and notes can focus a teacher on what a student knows as well as how the student learns. Information derived from daily observations of small groups can be used to reteach concepts and skills to students who are struggling with a particular requirement of the group.

Performance Assessment- Built around the requirements of each group is a performance outcome that can be used for assessment purposes. Performance assessment tools require the mastery of prerequisite skills that can be used and combined to perform higher level cognitive thinking and produce an outcome that can measure students' ability to apply their learning to new situations. For example, after learning the rules and guidelines of heraldry, knights design an authentic coat of arms for their shields and armor. After studying the history and purposes of craft guilds, guild members help write the rules and charter by which their guild operates. After studying laws and the Middle Ages system of justice, officials of the fair develop their own laws for the fair, and appropriate punishment for each law broken. After researching famous personalities of this historical period, students create props and exhibits that reflect the accomplishments and area of expertise for which these people were famous.

Rubrics- Rubrics as an assessment tool have the advantage of making grading criteria known to students, insuring accountability, maintaining focus on content and performance standards, as well as reducing teacher subjectivity when evaluating the student's work. For this project several rubrics are used for evaluation purposes. Each student's writing journal from the point of view of the individual represented is evaluated through the grade level's Journal Writing Rubric. Students are familiar with the standards of this rubric because it is used during Integrated Language Arts journal assignments throughout the year. A rubric for costumes has been developed to make students more aware of the criteria involved in evaluating their costume, as well as to remove the subjectivity involved with evaluating costumes. Formal oral presentations presented at the fair such as speeches, storytelling, and plays or skits, are evaluated using the grade level Oral Presentation Rubric which students are familiar with from Integrated Language Arts classes. All rubrics are given out when group requirements are introduced, clearly defining for the students what work will be evaluated by rubrics, and the standards that will be used to evaluate the finished product. These evaluations are done during the dress rehearsal grade level assemblies. Videotaping is used to help in the evaluation process.

Self-Assessment & Surveys- During this project, students are periodically asked to reflect on their own participation and contributions to their group, as well as on the overall effectiveness of the group in working together, based on the principles of cooperative learning. Students self-evaluate their individual performance and the performance of the group as a whole by responding to a teacher-created survey sheet. Groups are monitored, and conferences with groups are completed as necessary.

Tests- The vehicle by which all the different groups share their knowledge and information to the rest of the grade level is the series of grade level assemblies just prior to Trade Fair Day. Students in the audience are prompted on the requirements that each group had and the information each group is responsible to make known to the audience. At the end of each day's presentations, students return to their individual classrooms and complete a teacher-created test of objective questions to measure their understanding of the basic concepts presented to them.

Trade Fair Day becomes the culmination of each individual's efforts to accurately portray oneself and one's group as members of society during the Middle Ages. What is reflected on our school grounds that day is a true mosaic of different interests and learning styles, where the whole truly becomes greater than each individual part. Seventh graders, after having participated in this project the year before, offer to help out, and in many cases, plead with teachers to let them be part of the project in some way. Sixth graders begin asking from day one when we will start the preparations for the fair. As early as September, many of them begin expressing preferences as to what segment of society they want to represent, usually because of individual study they have conducted on knights, craft guilds, or some other aspect of the Middle Ages society. The enthusiasm they experienced with the Trade Fair as fifth graders carries over to sixth grade even as we begin our study of other societies, such as that of the ancient Egyptians or Greeks. Studying a variety of historical periods is more relevant to the students because of the interactive, hands-on experiences they have enjoyed as part of the Middle Ages Trade Fair project. This is truly a unique event that showcases our students' talents to their peers and to the community at large.